



MILLER of MANSFIELD.

M

THE
K I N G
AND THE
MILLER OF MANSFIELD.

A DRAMATIC TALE.

AS IT IS PERFORMED AT THE

T H E A T R E S R O Y A L.

BY MR. D O D S L E X.

L O N D O N:

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M, DEC, LXXXVIII.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

M E N.

The King.

The Miller.

Richard, the Miller's Son.

Lord Lurewell.

Courtiers, and Keepers of the Forest.

W O M E N.

Peggy.

Margery.

Kate.

SCENE, SHERWOOD FOREST.



The King and the Miller of Mansfield.

SCENE, *Sherwood Forest.*

Enter several Courtiers, as if lost.

1st Courtier.

TIS horrid dark! and this wood, I believe, has neither end nor side.

2d Court. You mean to get out at; for we have found one in, you see.

3d Court. I wish our good King Harry had kept his home to hunt; in my mind, the pretty tame deer in London, make much better sport than the wild ones in Sherwood Forest.

4th Court. I can't tell which way his Majesty went, nor whether any body is with him or not; let us keep together, pray.

5th Court. Ay, ay, like true courtiers, take care of ourselves, whatever becomes of master.

6th Court. Well, it's a terrible thing to be lost in the dark.

7th Court. It is. And yet it's so common a case, that one would not think it should be at all so. Why, we are all of us lost in the dark every day of our lives. Knaves keep us in the dark by their cunning, and fools by their ignorance. Divines lead us in dark mysteries; lawyers in dark cases; misers in dark intrigues—nay, the light of reason which we boast so much of, what it is but a dark lantern, which just serves to prevent us from running our nose against a post, perhaps; it is no more able to lead us out of the dark vale of error and ignorance, in which we are lost, than a ignis fatuus would be to conduct us out of the wood.

1st Court. But, my lord, this is no time for preaching, methinks. And, for all your merriment, daylight would be much preferable to this darkness, I believe.

3d Court. Indeed would it. But, come, let us go on; we shall find some house or other by and by.

4th Court. Come along.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter the King alone.

No, no, this can be no public road, that's certain. I am lost, quite lost, indeed. Of what advantage is it now to be a King? Night shows me no respect—I cannot see better, nor walk so tall as another man. What is a King? Is he not wiser than another man? Not without his counselors, I plainly find. Is he not more powerful? I oft have been told so, indeed; but what now can my power command? Is he not greater and more magnificent? When seated on his throne, and surrounded with nobles and flatterers, perhaps he may think so; but when lost in a wood, alas! what is he but a common man? His wisdom knows not which is north and which is south; his power a haggard dog would bark at; and his greatness the haggard would not bow to. And yet how oft we are pulled up with these false attributes? Well, in losing the monarch, I have found the man.

[*The report of a gun is heard.*]
Hark! some villain, sure, is near! What were I best to do? Will my Majesty protect me? No. Throw Majesty aside then, and let mankind do it.

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Enter the Miller.

Miller. I believe I hear tharogue! Who's there?

King. No rogue, I assure you.

Miller. Little better, friend, I believe. Who fir'd that gun?

King. Not I, indeed.

Miller. You lie, I believe.

King. Lie! lie! how strange it seems to me to be talk'd to in this stile. [*Aside.*] Upon my word I don't.

Miller. Come, come, firrah, confess; you have shot one of the King's deer, have you not?

King. No, indeed; I owe the King more respect. I heard a gun go off, indeed, and was afraid some robbers might have been near.

Miller. I'm not bound to believe this, friend. Pray who are you? what's your name?

King. Name!

Miller. Name! yes, name. Why you have a name, have not you? Where do you come from? What is your business here?

King. These are questions I have not been us'd to, honest man.

Miller. May be so; but they are questions no honest man would be afraid to answer, I think. So, if you can give no better account of yourself, I shall make bold to take you along with me, if you please.

King. With you! what authority have you to—

Miller. The King's authority, if I must give you an account, Sir. I am John Cockle, the Miller of Mansfield, one of His Majesty's keepers in this forest of Sherwood; and I will let no suspected fellow pass this way, that cannot give a better account of himself than you have done, I promise you.

King. I must submit to my own authority.

[*Aside.*

Very well, Sir; I am glad to hear the King has so good an officer; and since I find you have his authority, I will give you a better account of myself, if you will do me the favour to hear it.

Miller. It's more than you deserve, I believe; but let's hear what you can say for yourself.

King. I have the honour to belong to the King, as well as you, and, perhaps, should be as unwill-

ling to see any wrong done him. I came down with him to hunt in the forest, and the chase leading us to-day a great way from home, I am benighted in this wood, and have lost my way.

Miller. This does not sound well—if you have been hunting, pray where is your horse?

King. I have tired my horse, so that he lay down under me, and I was obliged to leave him.

Miller. If I thought I might believe this now.

King. I am not used to lie, honest man.

Miller. What! do you live at court, and not lie? that's a likely story, indeed!

King. Be that as it will, I speak truth now, I assure you; and, to convince you of it, if you will attend me to Nottingham, if I am near it, or give me a night's lodging in your own house, here is something to pay you for your trouble; and, if that is not sufficient, I will satisfy you in the morning to your utmost desire.

Miller. Ay, now I am convinced you are a courtier; here is a little bribe for to-day, and a large promise for to-morrow, both in a breath. Here, take it again, and take this along with it—John Cockle is no courtier; he can do what he ought—without a bribe.

King. Thou art a very extraordinary man, I must own; and I should be glad, methinks, to be farther acquainted with thee.

Miller. There! and thou! prythee don't that and thou me—I believe I am as good a man as yourself, at least.

King. Sir, I beg your pardon.

Miller. Nay, I am not angry, friend; only I don't love to be too familiar with any body, before I know whether they deserve it or not.

King. You are in the right. But what am I to do?

Miller. You may do what you please. You are twelve miles from Nottingham, and all the way through this thick wood; but if you are resolved upon going thither to-night, I will put you in the road, and direct you the best I can; or if you will accept of such poor entertainment as a miller can give, you shall be welcome to stay to-night, and in the morning I will go with you myself.

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King. And cannot you go with me to-night?

Miller. I would not go with you to-night if you were the King.

King. Then I must go with you, I think.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE changes to the Town of Mansfield.

Dick alone.

Well, dear Mansfield, I am glad to see thy face again. But my heart aches, methinks, for fear this should be only a trick of theirs to get me in to their power. Yet the letter seems to be wrote with an air of sincerity, I confess; and the girl was never us'd to lie, till she kept a lord company. Let me see; I'll read it once more.

"Dear Richard,

"I am at last (though much too late for me) convinc'd of the injury done to us by that base man, who made me think you false; he contriv'd these letters which I send you, to make me think you just upon the point of being married to another, a thought I could not bear with patience; so, aiming at revenge on you, contented to my own undoing. But, for your own sake, I beg you to return hither, for I have some hopes of being able to do you justice, which is the only comfort of your most distressed, but every affectionate, PEGGY."

There can be no cheat in this, sure! The letters she has sent are, I think, a proof of her sincerity. Well, I will go to her, however—I cannot think she will again betray me. If she has as much tenderness left for me, as, in spite of her ill usage, I still feel for her, I'm sure she won't. Let me see, I am not far from the house, I believe. [*Exit.*]

SCENE changes to a Room.

Peggy and Phoebe.

Phoebe. Pray, Madam, make yourself easy.

Peggy. Ah, Phoebe! she that has lost her virtue, with it lost her ease, and all her happiness. Being cheated fool! to think him false.

Phoebe. Be patient, Madam; I hope you will shortly be reveng'd on that deceitful lord.

Peggy. I hope I shall, for that were just revenge. But will revenge make me happy? Will it excuse my falsehood? Will it restore me to the heart of my much-injur'd love? Ah! no. That blooming-innocence he us'd to praise, and call the greatest beauty of our sex, is gone. I have no charms left that might renew the flame I took such pains to quench.

[*Knocking at the door.*]

See who's there. O, heavens, 'tis he! Alas! that ever I shou'd be asham'd to see the man I love!

Enter Richard, who stands looking on her at a distance, she weeping.

Dick. Well, Peggy, (but I suppose you're Madam now, in that fine dress) you see you have brought me back; is it to triumph in your falsehood? or am I to receive the slighted leavings of your fine lord?

Peggy. O, Richard! after the injury I have done you, I cannot look on you without confusion: But do not think so hardly of me; I stay'd not to be slighted by him, for the moment I discover'd his vile plot on you, I fled his sight, nor could he ever prevail to see me since.

Dick. Ah, Peggy! you were too hasty in believing; and much I fear, the vengeance aim'd at me had other charms to recommend it to you: such bravery as that [*pointing to her clothes.*] I had not to bestow; but if a tender honest heart could please, you had it all! and if I wish'd for more, 'twas for your sake.

Peggy. O Richard! when you consider the wicked stratagem he contriv'd to make me think you base and deceitful, I hope you will, at least, pity my folly, and, in some measure, excuse my falsehood; that you will forgive me, I dare not hope.

Dick. To be forc'd to fly from my friends and country, for a crime that I was innocent of, is an injury that I cannot easily forgive, to be sure: but if you are less guilty of it than I thought, I shall be very glad; and if your design be really as you say to clear me, and to expose the baseness of him that betray'd and ruin'd you, I will join with you with

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with all my heart. But how do you propose to do this?

Peg. The King is now in the forest a hunting, and our young lord is every day with him: Now, I think, if we could take some opportunity of showing ourselves at His Majesty's feet, and complaining of the injustice of one of his courtiers, it might, perhaps, have some effect upon him.

Dick. If we were suffer'd to make him sensible of it, perhaps it might; but the complaints of such little folks as we seldom reach the ears of Majesty.

Peg. We can but try.

Dick. Well, if you will but go with me to my father's, and stay there till such an opportunity happens, I shall believe you in earnest, and will join with you in your design.

Peg. I will do any thing to convince you of my sincerity, and to make satisfaction for the injuries which have been done you.

Dick. Will you go now?

Peg. I'll be with you in less than an hour.

Exeunt.

SCENE changes to the Mill.

Margery and Kate knitting.

Kate. O dear, I would not see a spirit for all the world; but I love dearly to hear stories of them. Well, and what then?

Mar. And so at last, in a dismal, hollow tone, —

[A knocking at the door frights them both; they scream out, and throw down their knitting.]

Mar. and Kate. Lord bless us! What's that?

Kate. O, dear mother, it's some judgement upon us, I'm afraid. They say, talk of the devil, and he'll come.

Mar. Hark, go and see who's at the door.

Kate. I shall not go, mother; do you go.

Mar. Come, let's both go.

Kate. Now don't speak as if you was afraid.

Mar. No, I won't if I can help it. Who's there?

Dick. [Without.] What! won't you let me in?

Kate. O gemini! it's like our Dick, I think—He's certainly dead, and it's his opinion.

Mar. Heav'n forbid! I think in my heart it's he himself. Open the door, Kate.

Kate. Nay, do you.

Mar. Come, we'll both open it.

They open the Door.

Enter Dick.

Dick. Dear mother, how do you do? I thought you would not have let me in.

Mar. Dear child, I'm overjoy'd to see thee; but I was so frightened, I did not know what to do.

Kate. Dear brother, I am glad to see you; how have you done this long while?

Dick. Very well, Kate. But where's my father?

Mar. He heard a gun go off just now, and he's gone to see who 'tis.

Dick. What they love venison at Mansfield as well as ever, I suppose?

Kate. Ay, and they will have it too.

Miller. [Without.] Hea! Madge! Kate! bring a light here.

Mar. Yonder he is.

Kate. Has he catch'd the rogue, I wonder?

Enter the King and the Miller.

Mar. Who have you got?

Miller. I have brought thee a stranger, Madge; thou must give him a supper, and a lodging if thou can'st.

Mar. You have got a better stranger of your own, I can tell you—Dick's come.

Miller. Dick! Where is he? Why Dick! He isn't my lad?

Dick. Very well, I thank you, father.

Miller. Faith, Sir, you must excuse me; I'm overjoy'd to see my boy. He has been at London, and I have not seen him these four years.

King. Well, I shall once in my life have the happiness of being treated as a common man; and seeing human nature without disguise.

Miller. What has brought thee home so unexpected?

Dick. You will know that presently.

Miller. Of that by-and bye then. We have got the King down in the forest a hunting.

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And this honest gentleman, who came down with his Majesty from London, has been with 'em to-day, it seems, and has lost his way. Come, Madge, see what thou can'st get for supper. Kill a couple of the best fowls; and go you, Kate, and draw a pitcher of ale. We are famous, Sir, at Mansfield, for good ale, and for honest fellows that know how to drink it.

King. Good ale well be acceptable, at present, for I am very dry. But pray, how came your son to leave you, and go to London?

Miller. Why, that's a story which Dick, perhaps, won't like to have told.

King. Then I don't desire to hear it.

Enter Kate with an earthen pitcher of ale and a horn.

Miller. So, now do you go help your mother—Sir, my hearty service to you.

King. Thank ye, Sir. This plain sincerity and freedom is a happiness unknown to kings. [*Aside.*

Miller. Come, Sir.

King. Richard, my service to you.

Dick. Thank you, Sir.

Miller. Well, Dick, and how dost thou like London? Come, tell us what thou hast seen?

Dick. Seen! I have seen the land of promise.

Miller. The land of promise! What dost thou mean?

Dick. The court, father.

Miller. Thou wilt never leave joking.

Dick. To be serious then: I have seen the disappointment of my hopes and expectations; and that's more than one would wish to see.

Miller. What! would the great man, thou wast recommended to, do nothing at all for thee at last?

Dick. Why, yes; he would promise me to the best!

Miller. Zounds! do the courtiers think their dependants can eat promises?

Dick. No, no; they never trouble their heads to think, whether we eat at all or not. I have now waited upon his lordship several years, tantalized with hopes and expectations; this year, promised

one place, the next another, and the third, to find and certain hope of—a disappointment. One falls, and it was promised better; another, and I am just half an hour too late; a third, and I miss the mouth of a creditor; a fourth, and I lose the hire of a flatterer; a fifth, and it brings a war; and the sixth, I am promised still. But having thus slept away four years, I awoke from my dream. My lord, I found, was so far from having it in his power to get a place for me, that he had been all this while seeking after one for himself.

Miller. Poor Dick! And is plain honesty, then, a recommendation to no place at court?

Dick. It may recommend you to be a flatterer, perhaps, but nothing further, nothing further, indeed. If you look higher, you must furnish yourself with other qualifications—You must learn to say Ay, or No; to run, or stand; to fetch or carry, or leap over a stick at the word of command. You must be master of the arts of flattery, insinuation, dissimulation, application, and [*pointing to his palm*] right application too, if you hope to succeed.

King. You don't consider I am a courtier, do you think?

Dick. Not I, indeed; 'tis no concern of mine what you are. If in general my character of the court is true, 'tis not my fault if it's disagreeable to your worship. There are particular exceptions, I own, and I hope you may be one.

King. Nay, I don't want to be flatter'd, so let that pass. Here's better success to you the next time you go to London.

Dick. I thank ye; but I don't design to see it again in haste.

Miller. No, no, Dick; instead of depending upon lords' promises, depend upon the labour of thine own hands; expect nothing but what thou can'st earn, and then thou wilt not be disappointed—But come, I want a description of London; thou hast told us nothing thou hast seen yet.

Dick. O! 'tis a fine place! I have seen huge houses with small hospitality; great men do little actions; and fine ladies do nothing at all. I have seen the honest lawyers of Westminster Hall, and the

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the virtuous inhabitants of 'Change Alley; the politic madmen of coffee houses, and the wise statesmen of Bedlam. I have seen merry tragedies, and sad comedies; devotion at an opera, and mirth at a sermon; I have seen fine clothes at St. James's, and long bills at Ludgate Hill. I have seen poor grandeur and rich poverty; high honours, and low flattery; great pride, and no merit. In short, I have seen a fool with a title, a knave with a petition, and an honest man with a thread-bare coat. Pray how do you like London?

Miller. And is this the best description thou canst give of it?

Dick. Yes.

King. Why, Richard, you are a satirist, I find.

Dick. I love to speak truth, Sir; if that happens to be satire, I can't help it.

Miller. Well, if this is London, give me my country cottage; which, though it is not a great house, not a fine house, is my own house, and I can show a receipt for the building it. But come, Sir, our supper, I believe, is ready for us, by this time; and to such as I have, you're welcome as a prince.

King. I thank you.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE changes to the Wood.

Enter several Keepers.

1st Keeper. The report of a gun was somewhere this way, I'm sure.

2d Keeper. Yes; but I can never believe that any body would come a deer-stealing so dark a night as this.

3d Keeper. Where did the deer harbour to-day?

4th Keeper. There was a herd lay upon Hamilton Hill, another just by Robinhood's chair, and a third here in Mansfield Wood.

1st Keeper. Ay; those they have been amongst.

2d Keeper. But we shall never be able to find 'em to-night, 'tis so dark.

3d Keeper. No, no; let's go back again.

1st Keeper. Zoons! you're afraid of a broken head, I suppose, if we should find 'em; and so had

rather sink back again. Hark! stand close. I hear 'em coming this way.

Enter the Courtiers.

1st Courtier. Did you not hear somebody just now? Faith I begin to be afraid we shall meet with some misfortunes to-night.

2d Courtier. Why if any body should take what we have got, we have made a fine business of it.

3d Courtier. Let them take it if they will; I am so tir'd I shall make but small resistance.

[*The Keepers rush upon them.*]

2d Keeper. Ay, rogues, rascals, and villains; you have got it, have you?

2d Courtier. Indeed we have got but very little; but what we have, you are welcome to, if you will but use us civilly.

1st Keeper. O, yes! very civilly; you deserve to be us'd civilly, to be sure.

4th Courtier. Why, what have we done that we may not be civilly us'd?

1st Keeper. Come, come, don't trifle; surrender.

1st Courtier. I have but three half-crowns about me.

2d Courtier. Here's three and six pence for you, gentlemen.

3d Courtier. Here's my watch; I have no money at all.

4th Courtier. Indeed I have nothing in my pocket but a snuff-box.

4th Keeper. What! the dogs want to bribe us, do they? No, rascals; you shall go before the Justice to-morrow, depend on't.

4th Courtier. Before the Justice! What! for being robb'd?

1st Keeper. For being robb'd! What do you mean? Who has robb'd you?

4th Courtier. Why did not you just now demand our money, gentlemen?

2d Keeper. O, the rascals; they will fence a robbery against us, I warrant.

4th Courtier. A robbery! Ay, to be sure.

1st Keeper. No, no; we did not demand your money, we demanded the deer you have kill'd.

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4th *Courtier*. The devil take the deer, I say; he bid us a chase of six hours, and got away from us at last.

1st *Keeper*. Zoons! ye dogs, do ye think to banter us? I tell ye you have this night shot one of the King's deer. Did not we hear the gun go off? Did not we hear you say, you was afraid it should be taken from you?

2d *Courtier*. We were afraid our money should be taken from us.

1st *Keeper*. Come, come, no more shuffling—I tell ye you're all rogues, and we'll have you hang'd, you may depend on't. Come, let's take them to old Cockle's; we're not far off—we'll keep 'em there all night, and to-morrow morning we'll away with 'em before the Justice.

4th *Courtier*. A very pretty adventure!

SCENE changes to a Mill.

King, Miller, Margery, and Dick, at Supper.

Miller. Come, Sir, you must mend a bad supper with a glass of good ale; here's King Harry's health.

King. With all my heart. Come, Richard, here's King Harry's health; I hope you are courteous enough to pledge me, are not you?

Dick. Yes, yes, Sir, I'll drink the king's health with all my heart.

Margery. Come, Sir, my humble service to you, and much good may do ye with your supper; I wish it had been better.

King. You need make no apologies.

Margery. We are obliged to your goodness in excusing our rudeness.

Miller. Pr'ythee, Margery, don't trouble the gentleman with compliments.

Margery. Lord, husband, if one had no more manners than you, the gentleman would take us all for beggars.

Miller. Now I think, the more compliments the less manners.

King. I think so too. Compliments in disguise, I believe, are like ceremonies in religion; we have destroy'd all true piety, and the other is hypocrisy and plain dealing.

Miller. Then a fig for all ceremony, and compliments too: give us thy hand, and let us drink and be merry.

King. Right, honest miller, let us drink and be merry. Come, have you got e'er a good song?

Miller. Ah! my singing days are over, but my man Joe has got an excellent one; and if you have a mind to hear it, I'll call him in.

King. With all my heart.

Miller. Joe!

Enter Joe.

Miller. Come, Joe, drink, boy: I have promis'd this gentleman that you shall sing him your last new song.

Joe. Well, master, if you have promis'd it him, he shall have it.

S O N G.

I.

How happy a state does the Miller possess,
Who would be no greater, nor fears to be less!
On his mill and himself he depends for support,
Which is better than servily cringing at court.

II.

What tho' he all dusty and whiten'd does go,
The more he's bespewder'd, the more like a bean;
A clown in this dress may be honest far
Than a courtier who struts in his garter and star.

III.

Tho' his hands are so daub'd they're not fit to be seen,
The hands of his betters are not very clean;
A palm more polite may as dirtily deal;
Gold, in handling, will stick to the fingers like meal.

IV.

What if, when a pudding for dinner he lacks,
He cribs, without scruple, from other men's sacks;
In this of right noble example he brags,
Who borrow as freely from other men's bags.

V.

Or should he endeavour to keep an estate,
In this he would mimic the tools of the state;
Whose aim is alone their own coffers to fill,
As all his concern's to bring grist to his mill.

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VI.

He eats when he's hungry, he drinks when he's dry,

And down when he's weary contented does lie;

Then rises up early to work and to sing:

If so happy a Miller, then who'd be a King?

Miller. There's a song for you.

King. He should go sing this at court, I think.

Dick. I believe, if he's wife, he will chuse to stay at home tho'.

Enter Peggy.

Miller. What wind blew you hither, pray! you have a good share of impudence, or you wou'd be asham'd to set your foot within my house, methinks.

Peg. Asham'd I am, indeed, but do not call me impudent.

[Weeps.]

Dick. Dear father, suspend your anger for the present; that she is here now is by my direction, all to do me justice.

Peg. To do that is all that is now in my power; for, as to myself, I am ruin'd past redemption; my character, my virtue, my peace, are gone: I am abandoned by my friends, dispis'd by the world, and expos'd to misery and want.

King. Pray let me know the story of your misfortune; perhaps it may be in my power to do something towards redressing them.

Peg. That you may learn from him whom I have wrong'd; but as for me, shame will not let me speak, or hear it told.

[Exit.]

King. She's very pretty.

Dick. O, Sir, I once thought her an angel! I lov'd her dearer than my life, and did believe her passion was the same for me: but a young nobleman of this neighbourhood happening to see her, her youth and blooming beauty presently struck his fancy; a thousand artifices were immediately employ'd to detach and ruin her. But all his arts were vain; not even the promise of making her his wife, could prevail upon her: in a little time he found out her love to me; and, imagining this to be the cause of her refusal, he, by forg'd letters, and feign'd stories, contriv'd to make her believe I was on the point of marriage with ano-

ther woman. Possess'd with this opinion, she, in a rage, writes me word, never to see her more; and, in revenge, consented to her own wedding. He contented with this, nor easy while I was so near, he brib'd one of his cast-off mistresses to swear a child to me, which she did: this was the occasion of my leaving my friends, and flying to London.

King. And how does she propose to do you justice?

Dick. Why, the King being now in this forest a hunting, we design to take some opportunity of throwing ourselves at his majesty's feet, and complaining of the injustice done us by this noble villain.

Miller. Ah! Dick! I expect but little relief from such an application. Things of this nature are so common among the great, that I am afraid it would only be made a jest of.

King. Those that can make a jest of what ought to be shocking to humanity, surely deserve not the name of great or noble men.

Dick. What do you think of it, Sir? If you be long to the court, you, perhaps, may know something of the King's temper.

King. Why, if I can judge of his temper at all, I think he would not suffer the greatest noblemen in his court, to do an injustice to the meanest subject in his kingdom. But, pray, who is the nobleman that is capable of such actions as these?

Dick. Do you know my lord Lurewell?

King. Yes.

Dick. That's the man.

King. Well, I would have you put your design in execution. 'Tis my opinion the king would not only hear your complaint, but redress your injuries.

Miller. I wish it may prove so.

Enter the Keepers, leading in the Courtier.

1st Keeper. Hold! Cockle! where are ye? why, man, we have nabb'd a pack of rogues here just in the fact.

King. Ha, ha, ha! what turn'd highwaymen, my lords? or deer-stealers?

1st Court. I am very glad to find your majesty in health and safety.

ad Court. We have run thro' a great many

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ills and dangers to-night—but the joy of finding your majesty so unexpectedly, will make us forget all we have suffered.

Miller and Dick. What! is this the King?

King. I am very glad to see you, my lords, I confess; and particularly you, my lord Lurewell.

Lure. Your majesty does me honour.

King. Yes, my lord; and I will do you justice too; your honour has been highly wrong'd by this young man.

Lure. Wrong'd! my liege.

King. I hope so, my lord; for I would fain believe you can't be guilty of baseness and treachery.

Lure. I hope your majesty will never find me so. What dares this villain say?

Dick. I am not to be frighted, my lord, I dare speak truth at any time.

Lure. Whatever strains my honour must be false.

King. I know it must, my lord: yet has this man, not knowing who I was, presum'd to charge your lordship, not only with great injustice to himself, but also with ruining an innocent virgin whom he lov'd, and who was to have been his wife; which, if true, were base and treacherous; but I know 'tis false, and therefore leave it to your lordship to say what punishment I shall inflict upon him, for the injury done to your honour.

Lure. I thank your majesty, I will not be severe; he shall only ask my pardon, and to-morrow morning be obliged to marry the creature he has traduc'd me with.

King. This is mild. Well, you hear your sentence.

Dick. May I not have leave to speak before your majesty?

King. What canst thou say?

Dick. If I had your majesty's permission, I believe I have certain witnesses which will undeniably prove the truth of all I have accus'd his lordship of.

King. Produce them.

Dick. Peggy!

Enter Peggy.

King. Do you know this woman, my lord?

Lure. I know her, please your majesty, by sight; she is a tenant's daughter.

Peg. [*Aside.*] Majesty! What, is this the king?

Dick. Yes.

King. Have you no particular acquaintance with her?

Lure. Hum—I have not seen her these several months.

Dick. True, my lord; and that is part of your accusation; for, I believe, I have some letters which will prove your lordship once had a more particular acquaintance with her. Here is one of the first his lordship wrote to her, full of the tenderest and most sincere protestation of love and constancy; here is another, which will inform your majesty of the pains he took to ruin her; there is an absolute promise of marriage before he could accomplish it.

King. What say you, my lord, are these your hands?

Lure. I believe, please your majesty, I might have a little affair of gallantry with the girl some time ago.

King. It was a little affair, my lord; a mean affair; and what you call gallantry, I call infamy. Do you think, my lord, that greatness gives a sanction to wickedness? Or that it is the prerogative of lords to be unjust and inhuman? You remember the sentence which yourself pronounced upon this innocent man; you cannot think it hard that it should pass on you who are guilty.

Lure. I hope your majesty will consider my rank, and not oblige me to marry her.

King. Your rank, my lord! Greatness that stoops to actions base and low, deserts its rank, and pulls its honour down. What makes your lordship great? is it your gilded equipage and dress? then put it on your meanest slave, and he's as great as you. Is it your riches or estate? the villain that should plunder you of all, would then be as great as you. No, my lord, he that acts greatly, is the true great man. I therefore think you ought, in justice, to marry her you thus have wrong'd.

Peg. Let my tears thank your majesty. But alas! I am afraid to marry this young lord; that

The King and the Miller of Mansfield.

would only give him power to use me worse, and still increase my misery: I therefore beg your majesty will not command him to do it.

King. Rise then, and hear me. My lord, you see how low the greatest nobleman may be reduced by ungen'rous actions. Here is, under your own hand, an absolute promise of marriage to this young woman, which, from a thorough knowledge of your unworthiness, she has prudently declined to make you fulfil. I shall therefore not insist upon it; but I command you, upon pain of my displeasure, immediately to settle on her three hundred pounds a year.

Peg. May heaven reward your majesty's goodness! 'Tis too much for me; but if your majesty thinks fit, let it be settled upon this much-injured man, to make some satisfaction for the wrongs which have been done him. As to myself, I only sought to clear the innocence of him I lov'd and wrong'd, then hide me from the world, and die forgiven.

Dick. This act of gen'rous virtue cancels all past failings; come to my arms, and be as dear as ever.

Peg. You cannot, sure, forgive me!

Dick. I can, I do, and still will make you mine.

Peg. O! why did I ever wrong such gen'rous love!

Dick. Talk no more of it. Here let us kneel, and thank the goodness which he has made us blest.

King. May you be happy.

Miller. [*Kneels.*] After I have seen so much of your majesty's goodness, I cannot despair of pardon, even for the rough usage your majesty received from me.

[*The King draws his sword; the Miller is frightened, and rises up, thinking he was going to kill him.*]

What have I done, that I should lose my life?

King. Kneel without fear. No, my good host, so far are you from having any thing to pardon, that I am much your debtor. I cannot think but so good and honest a man will make a worthy and honourable knight; so rise up, Sir John Cockle; and, to support your state, and in some sort requite the pleasure you have done us, a thousand marks a year shall be your revenue.

Miller. Your majesty's bounty I receive with thankfulness; I have been guilty of no meanness to obtain it, and hope I shall not be obliged to keep it upon base conditions; for, tho' I am willing to be a faithful subject, I am resolved to be a free and honest man.

King. I rely upon your being so; and, to gain the friendship of such a one, I shall always think an addition to my happiness, tho' a king.

Worth, in whatever state, is sure a prize,
Which kings, of all men, ought not to despise;
By selfish sycophants so close besieg'd,
'Tis by mere chance a worthy man's oblig'd.
But hence, to every courtier be it known,
Virtue shall find protection from the throne.

THE END.



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